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European war - Conventions

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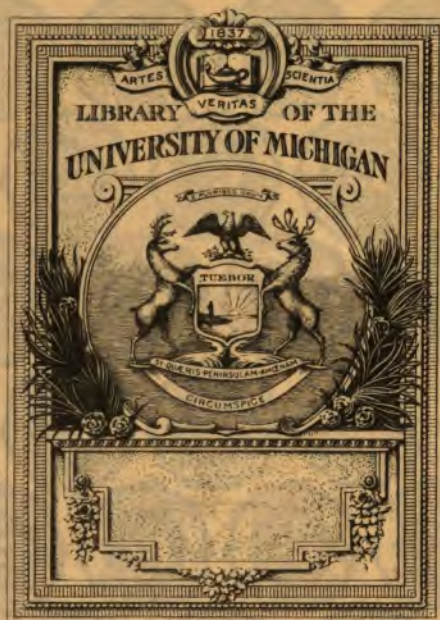
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A Report to the Secretary of War

... on ...

American Military Dead Overseas

[1920]

RALPH HAYES
WASHINGTON
MAY 14, 1920



63-19-27-15

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL AND REPLY.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *May 12, 1920.*

The Honorable the SECRETARY OF WAR.

SIR: Pursuant to your instructions of February 13, 1920, to assist in effecting a Franco-American agreement on repatriating our military dead and to suggest those burial places most suitable for permanent retention, I sailed for Europe on February 19, returned to America on April 30, and present herewith an informal report.

Respectfully yours,

RALPH HAYES,
Assistant to the Secretary of War.

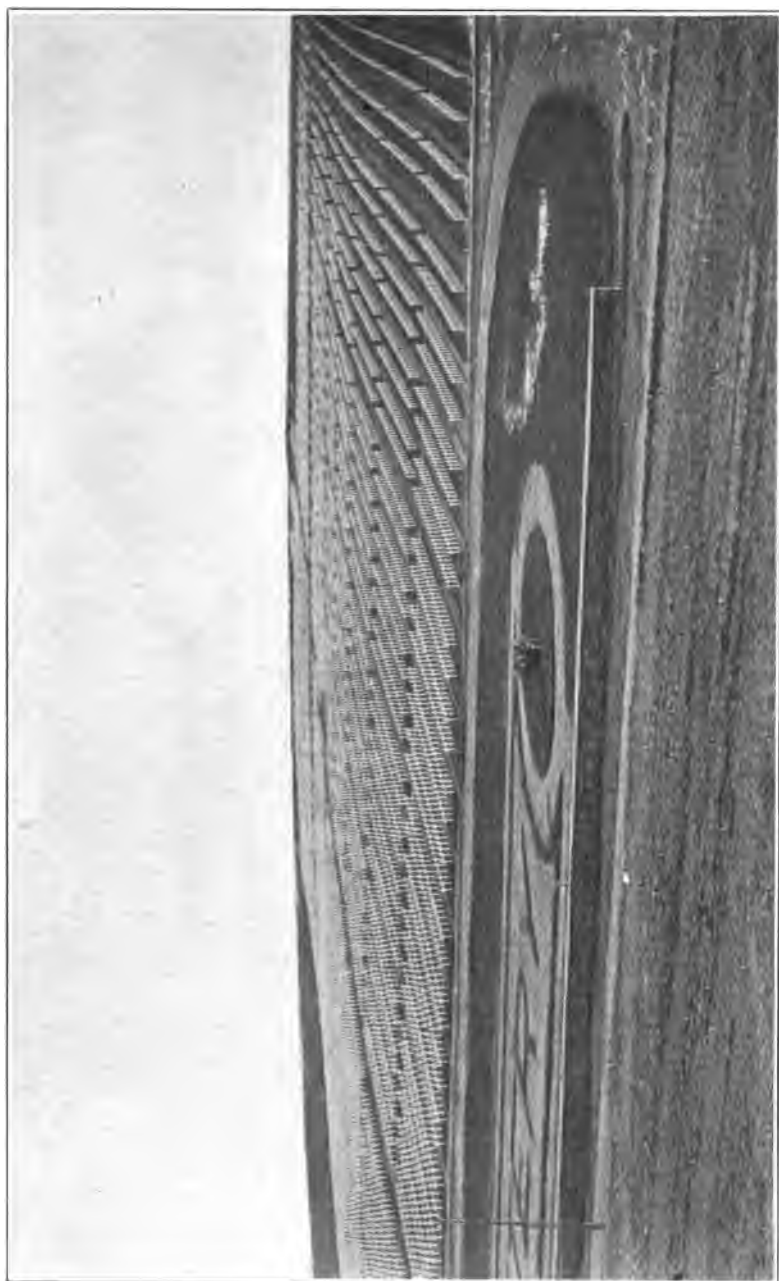
WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, May 20, 1920.

MR. HAYES:

The recommendations in this report, numbered 1 to 7, are hereby approved, with the reservation that the permanence of the cemetery at Bony will be determined later, when we have accurate information as to the number of soldier dead associated with British military operations to be retained in Europe.

I direct that this report be published immediately, in convenient form for distribution to the relatives and friends of our soldier dead abroad, in order that an accurate and detailed picture of all the conditions may be fully known to them.

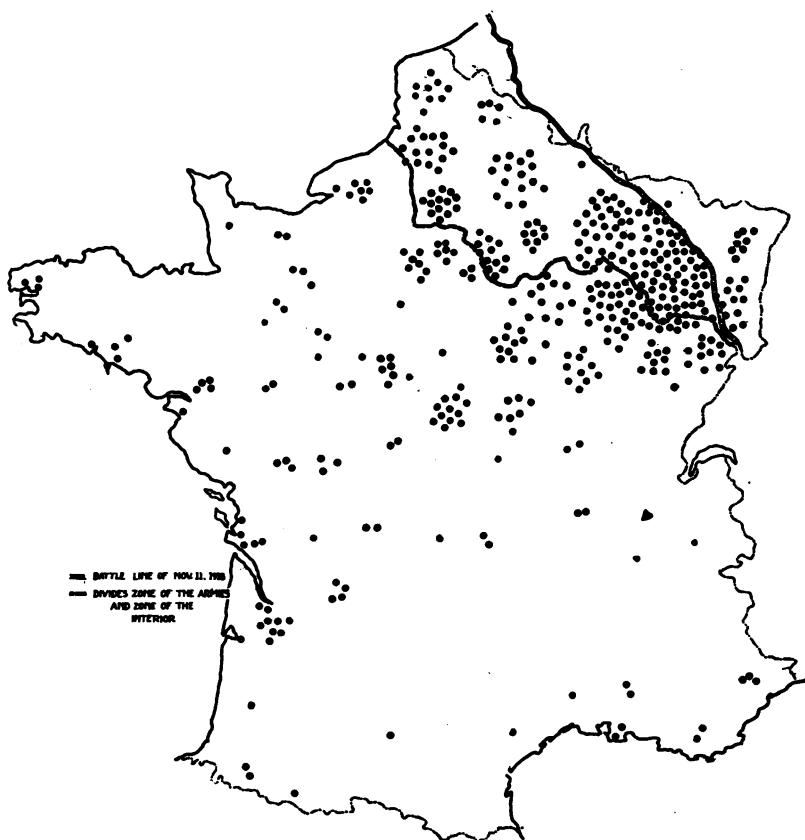
NEWTON D. BAKER,
Secretary of War.



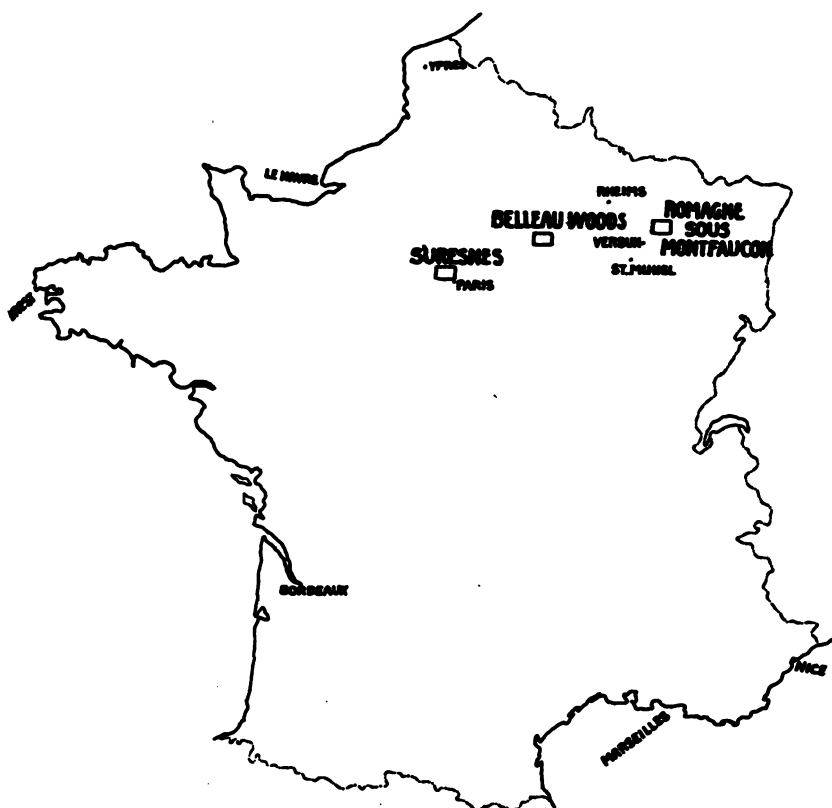
ROMAGNE SOUS MONTFAUCON



AWAITING TRANSPORT, SOUTHAMPTON, FEBRUARY, 1920



BURIAL PLACES OF AMERICAN MILITARY DEAD
NOW IN FRANCE



THE THREE PROPOSED PERMANENT CEMETERIES FOR
AMERICAN MILITARY DEAD IN FRANCE



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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AMERICAN MILITARY DEAD OVERSEAS.

I. POLICY OF WAR DEPARTMENT REGARDING RETURN OF MILITARY DEAD.

One need not search long or far to find curious misimpressions regarding the intention of the Government with respect to the disposition of American military remains. There is a feeling, vague, but rather widely spread, that the actual care of American remains in France is in the hands, or at least under the supervision, of the French Republic. There is some prevalence of a fear also that those remains not returned to America will be abandoned eventually overseas, or that their care will consist only in such sporadic attention as the willingness of local authorities or the efforts of interested relatives may make possible.

It is proper therefore to restate once again the attitude of the War Department.

Those military remains, whose return is requested by their nearest of kin, will be returned to America and to the location designated by the relatives, at the expense of the Government. Those, whose return from France is not requested or whose permanent retention there is desired by the families concerned, will rest in a small number of American fields of honor, in areas permanently assigned for cemetery purposes to the United States and under the constant and perpetual care of the American Government.

This attitude of the War Department has been stated repeatedly. To quote from one of a number of similar announcements, the Secretary of War wrote in January, 1920:

The department wishes to repeat and emphasize the fact that it is pledged to return to America all those bodies which the nearest of kin desire brought back. It is pledged likewise to care fittingly and tenderly for those whose relatives desire them to rest in the Fields of Honor, which will contain all bodies to be retained overseas.

In the British Isles (where about 3 per cent of our dead rest) only those remains are being left at present whose retention has been requested. But negotiations are in progress with the French Government for permission to remove military dead from Great Britain to the permanent American burial places in France. If these negotiations are successful it is probable that all bodies in the British Isles not requested to be returned to America or to eventual private cus-

tody will be concentrated in the Fields of Honor in northern France. From Germany all bodies in the care of the Government will be removed either to the United States or to the permanent American cemeteries abroad.

I do not hesitate to say that the sight of actual disinterments, however reverently made, and the vision of the Fields of Honor have left with me the fervent hope that the proportion of parents preferring to have their sons rest overseas will be large. But, officially, no officer of the War Department can permit such a hope to defeat or delay the redemption of the pledge made at the war's beginning, that the desire of the families as to their own dead would take precedence over every other consideration.

The movement of those remains which are to return is begun. The first bodies from England were shipped in late February. The first shipment from France started in early April. The initial evacuations from Germany will be made in May.

Following the determination upon the permanent sites of the American Fields of Honor overseas, the work of beautifying them may be pushed forward speedily, in order that they may serve alike as a symbol of a Nation's gratitude to its departed sons and a demonstration to all peoples for all time of America's response to a great threat.

II. PUBLIC OPINION ON THE DISPOSITION OF MILITARY REMAINS.

A punctured tire had stopped my automobile along a byroad near the northwestern frontier of Belgium. While repairs were progressing I walked into a field beside the road, where a multitude of craters bore witness to a violent artillery duel. In the center of the field what might have been an imposing shaft or statue had become scattered particles of rock. Here and there were bits of wood in the ground, perhaps débris of battle. But a closer examination disclosed some semblance of symmetry about them; and a detailed survey of the field proved it to be a German cemetery, or the pitiful remnant of what had been one, constructed during the first advance of the invader and destined for four years to see a succession of blue and gray and khaki uniforms sway backward and forward across it. The rock dust in the middle of the plot had been an impressive monument; each splintered bit of wood had been raised to mark the resting place of a German soldier.

Five million soldier corpses lie in France, killed during four years of fighting. The terrific destructiveness of modern engines of war; the carelessness of soldiers in failing often to keep marks of identity

upon their persons; the effect of newly introduced chemicals upon the markings on name plates; the inevitable uncertainty that occurs in the heat and perils of battle—these have raised to mammoth proportions the task of finding and bringing together and identifying the dead of the World War.

Happily for us, the situation with respect to American dead is relatively much less unfortunate than is the case among the Allies. America was in the war for a year and seven months; for a considerable part of that time we had no great number of troops in the line. Britain and France, Belgium and Serbia, fought more than four years. The frontage in France held by the Americans at the armistice and the number of men holding it were respectively greater than the British line and forces in France at that time; but the Britons had been in the battle since 1914 and their dead had fallen "from Nieuport to Nazareth"; ours (so far as those at the front is concerned) were mainly in a small area. More important, many of the battle-field cemeteries of the Allies had changed hands repeatedly as no man's land moved up or back; the American cemeteries were behind a constantly advancing army; many of them were shelled but—more than momentarily—none were lost to the enemy.

The initial task for each of the allied powers after hostilities was to bring in their dead from the burial places that were lonely or inaccessible, or otherwise unsuitable, to complete the work of identification, and to beautify the graves of their comrades. The War Department having stated that the wishes of the families concerned would be followed, the question early arose as to the ultimate disposition of American remains. In the course of the discussion, national organizations were formed to urge the retention of the dead in France or to insist upon their return to America, and no little heat was engendered, despite the fact that each group was assured from the first that its wishes with regard to the disposition of its own dead would be scrupulously respected.

Those in France and in America who advocate keeping our dead overseas urge, in opposing *immediate* repatriation, that the transportation facilities of northern France are still perilously meager and that every effort should be centered on using such track and transport as is available for the supply of food and shelter and working materials to the returning inhabitants of the devastated areas (which in the main are coterminous with the cemeterial areas). The population of France, they recall, was under a cruel strain for five years of war; and even yet the devastation in the north, and the fiscal and industrial difficulties throughout the country, should make us unwilling to place the further burden on the morale of this brave people that would be caused by the continual sight of endless funeral trains passing

through the country. France's own dead, they assert, have not been returned from the battle front and from the colonies to their homes; the vast amount of preliminary work, under conditions immeasurably more difficult than ours, will make it impossible for the French to begin this return until a considerable interval has elapsed; and in the meanwhile no discrimination should be made in favor of America by giving it preferential treatment over the other associated powers.

In opposing likewise the *ultimate* return of military remains to America they state that the gruesomeness of the operation is insufficiently appreciated by those who demand it, and that sentimentally the reverence which—as relatives or as countrymen—we feel toward the fallen may be more beautifully and appropriately shown by suitably adorning their tombs and surroundings and by permitting them to rest with their fellows beneath the fields they fought to save.

But those who insist on bringing back the bodies of the dead remind us that our traditional policy—as exemplified in the Philippines, in Cuba, and in the return of John Paul Jones—has been to bring back our own. They point to a Franco-American agreement, concluded in August, 1918, providing that—

The Government of the French Republic will examine conjointly with the American Government the measures to be taken to insure * * * the transport and return to the United States of the bodies * * * interred in France.

If American dead are left in France, they assert, the necessity for preserving the inviolability of our burial places will be the more likely to involve the United States in future European wars.

The position of American parents, they add, is radically different from that of the French and most of the Allies. In the latter case, the dead, even if unreturned, are sufficiently close to permit sorrowing relatives to make reverential pilgrimages to the graves and to show the respect they feel for their lost sons. But for Americans there is necessary a long trip to the seacoast, a trans-Atlantic voyage, and another journey by land across a country strange in its language and customs. The project is one of great difficulty at best, they insist, and it is wholly impossible for that majority of parents who are of moderate means.

Both those who deplore and those who demand the return of remains to America have been inclined at times to voice generalizations which are scarcely supported by sufficient evidence.

Occasionally it is stated that the first wish of the dead, themselves, could they be consulted, would be to return to their own families and homes; perhaps with slightly greater frequency we are told that the preference of those who lie in France would be to remain where they fell. No actual poll of soldiers' opinions, sufficiently general

to be conclusive, seems ever to have been taken which would support either of these assertions.

The correspondence of the War Department indicates that a majority of the parents and near relatives of the American Expeditionary Forces' dead prefer to have the remains brought back to America. It tends to show also that the majority of those who have no near relatives buried abroad favor the retention of our dead overseas. The first convention of the American Legion in the United States and one post bellum divisional poll furnished evidence signifying a probable preponderance of opinion among service men favoring retention abroad in the absence of an adverse expression on the part of the families concerned.

Some months ago a compilation of replies from an inquiry sent to approximately 75,000 emergency addresses of deceased soldiers indicated that in about 59 per cent of the cases the return of the remains to America was desired. The additional 41 per cent was made up of 26 per cent who affirmatively requested retention in France, 14 per cent who did not reply, and a very small number requesting reburial in countries other than the United States.

More recent revisions of this data for localized areas tend to show that about 60 per cent of the remains in the vicinity of Brest and about 56 per cent of those about St. Nazaire will be returned to America.

It has been alleged that the motive behind the proposal for the return of bodies is "the propaganda of the undertakers and coffin makers." So, too, it has been charged that activating the movement for the retention of the dead abroad was the hope of "the French" to make their presence a source of constant and substantial financial revenue. Specific and sufficient data has not yet been adduced to indicate that either fear is borne out in fact. One group of embalmers did take part in the dissemination of advertisements and circular letters which, from the viewpoint of professional ethics, were open to question. But there was a repudiation without delay from the recognized association of reputable funeral directors. Undoubtedly, also, instances of extortion and profiteering might be found among merchants and innkeepers in the vicinity of some of the hundreds of American burial places in France; it will not be wondered at by those who have seen too many similar instances near military camps in America. But it is not true that there exists now in France any generally prevalent effort to capitalize financially American burial places.

The number of differing localities and persons involved precludes the making of any sweeping statements concerning the attitude of the French populace toward our cemeteries. My own experience was deeply gratifying. No one who goes through the overseas burial

places will fail to see incidents that are as genuine and sincere as they are touching and reverential.

While Gen. Walsh was still the American commander at Bordeaux he went to a village cemetery near by with Gen. Jadwin to visit the grave of a man from the latter's troops. They found an old French woman pottering about the graves; and they learned on questioning her that the women of the neighboring village had divided the mounds among themselves and that each cared for her quota of Americans.

When I asked the director of Red Cross activities in France and Belgium what his experience had been, he replied by showing me a current report from one of his district managers, in which I read:

Shortly after arriving here we found in the neglected Boche cemetery of Ardon one grave not buried in weeds. On this grave grew rose bushes long tended by unknown French hands; at the head of the grave one read on the cross from which hung a French wreath the name of the soldier buried there during the German occupation, Capt. Miller, American aviator.

In the fields at Merval while plowing a farmer found the body of an American, killed in the taking of that region between the Vesle and the Aisne. Who saw that this ally's body was transferred to an American cemetery? Naturally the old father of Mlle. Lecat, of our "Village liberaes committee" at Merval.

At the same committee's barrack one day there halted an American Army car, with a captain speaking no French. He was in search of the grave of his brother, killed in an attack which had not gained the expected ground, so that the fallen officer's body had been buried by the Boches behind their lines. The captain, who had been with the Army of occupation on the Rhine, had, curiously enough, been able to get from German sources a description of where his brother's grave was to be found—in a German cemetery at a tiny hamlet back of the heights dominating the north side of the Aisne. But, even with this description, he was at a loss, for the little roads leading to the hamlet in question were as vague to him as the language of the inhabitants. Mlle. Lecat, who can understand English, got into the captain's car, guided him to Cuisy, and there, most difficult of all, learned from one of the few inhabitants where to look for that lost little enemy cemetery. Behind the smashed hilltop village they found it, utterly buried in weeds; and, as the captain's German description had it, there indeed was his brother's grave, the last in the last row of weathered crosses.

The care which Mme. Dufay, of the S. S. B. M. committee at Chezy-on-Orxois has given to our dead of the Chateau-Thierry region is infinitely touching. Mother of three sons dead for France, she established herself at Chezy, near the grave of one of them killed in a joint French and American attack. For his American comrades in arms, dead for the same cause, there is no service she has not rendered—searching out their graves in the woods, having their bodies exhumed, collecting for their relations any relics that she could find on them, wrapping them in her own white sheets, transferring them to our cemeteries, planting their new graves with flowers.

Dr. J. F. Wadsworth, an American resident of Chateau-Thierry, in a communication to Hon. Richard Yates, reprinted in the Congressional Record of March 26, 1920, writes from intimate knowledge

of the willingness of the near-by population to be helpful. Among the experiences he recounts is this one:

From time to time the people come to us telling of the finding of American graves. We have gone out with them, feeling glad for their solicitude for our American soldiers.

This morning I went to one of those villages from which had come the word that Madame Assailly had found four graves. We found her, with her aged, crippled husband, living in a poor, shell-torn house down near the banks of the Marne. While she was hurriedly making her toilet to ride with us in our automobile her husband told of the time when the bombardment of their village was made, and how, because of his lameness, he was left behind while his wife was taken away prisoner by the Germans. One could easily see the pleasure felt by the old lady in being able to give this valuable information to us concerning our dead. * * * Hurrying on before us Madame Assailly brought us to the place where lying about 50 feet from each other were three places marked with improvised crosses made of sticks or laths about 2 feet in length. * * * As we turned to go back to the road Madame Assailly remarked that it was to her a great happiness to render some service to the Americans who had done so much for them.

An ex-sergeant in the Expeditionary Forces, Hudson Hawley, returned to France a year after the armistice to revisit the scenes he had known in war time. On All Souls Day he was in the village of Perigueux in the Department of the Dordogne where, in the churchyard of St. Georges, a number of Americans lie. His story of "The Fading Trail of the Yank," in the Home Sector, says of his visit:

I was the only living American in that area, the only ex-soldier there to pay respect to those of his comrades who lie buried in what is pretty nearly the farthest south cemetery of ours in France. But our allies, the good people of the countryside, had preceded me in their devotions to my countrymen.

In a central position in the cemetery, so disposed as not to favor any particular grave, was a great wreath with a ribbon of silver and horizon blue, bearing the inscription, "Aux soldats Americains." At least every other of the little mounds was decorated with a bunch of wild flowers, brought by some child, no doubt, for as I entered the inclosure I found many of the youngsters of the neighborhood going silently and daintily about laying their offerings on the graves. A fair sprinkling of middle-aged and elderly Frenchwomen were on hand, moving about among the plots, reading what they could of the names, and depositing their humble wreaths.

And as I stood there with bared head before that spectacle of friendly solicitude for the fallen sons of American mothers, monsieur le cure of St. George, with his two young assistant priests, came marching in with cassock and surplice and cross, and, uncovering, stood before the ranks of the graves and began to recite the Latin commemorative service for the dead.

It was biting cold and snowing hard little pellets, yet the kindly old priest and the two young men beside him stood there a good quarter of an hour, giving antiphon and response for the strangers who remained within their gates. At the final "Requiescat in pace," with its concluding "Amen," they remained standing in meditation for a moment, and then solemnly made a short tour around the cemetery before filing out as they came.

Some time before the armistice, the Secretary of War was returning from the front line to the American General Headquarters, when his automobile stopped during the passing of a funeral procession. The Secretary followed the cortege to the burial place and found there, to his astonishment, not only a French padre and a Protestant chaplain, arm in arm, with an escort of soldiers and choir boys, but gathered there as well the women of the village, with two huge wreaths—the more beautiful because of their crude and homely fashioning—to place on the newly turned earth.

After his return to America the Secretary referred to the incident in a public address. In the audience was the poet Edmund Vance Cook, to whom the story so appealed that he reconstructed in his verses, “Mothers of France,” the narrative of the tenderness of those Frenchwomen toward the unknown private of the 42d Division, who had come to the end of the rainbow;

These women of France he came to save
Had never known his face or heard his name,
But when they saw the funeral file they came,
Dropping their daily tasks, to take the place
Of his own womankind. His mother's face
Shone out from theirs. Almost it seemed that she
Had spirited across the wind-lashed sea
And wept through those sad eyes of Picardy.
Great heart of France! Which hath withstood so well
The blast of battles and the hates of hell,
Which yet hath grace to spare thy prayers and flowers,
From thy unnumbered dead to one of ours.
Our love is thine! By heart, by hand, by head;
By whatsoever pledge it may be said!
By these—thy women, mothering our dead!

The weather never becomes sufficiently stormy, says the caretaker at Suresnes, to stop the coming of the townsfolk or their caring for the grave plots of the Americans. From our old headquarters at Chaumont I started on a cemeterial inspection trip just after day-break on an April morning. Even at that early hour I met at the gate of the little cemetery old Madame Fauriat, carrying a basket of simple flowers to scatter among the trim crosses where the dew reflected the dawn's early light.

Many instances came to my attention of cases where caretakers had to restrain French villagers from placing such decorations on American graves as conflicted with the regulations designed to insure uniformity of appearance. Sometimes this course was thought by the peasants to indicate a lack of respect and reverence for our dead on the part of the cemeterial authorities. To such an extent is this true that the Graves Registration Service has in preparation a bilingual pamphlet, explanatory both of the regulations applying

to the decoration of our cemeteries and the appreciation felt for the kindly solicitude which prompts the adornment of American graves by French citizens.

But these instances, even though numerous, perhaps do not justify a positive generalization; they certainly, however, refute the contrary conclusion that on the part of the inhabitants of France there is no respect for or other than a commercial interest in the graves of the Yanks who will be always overseas.

III. FRANCO-AMERICAN NEGOTIATIONS, JUNE, 1918- FEBRUARY, 1920.

The customs of the French people attendant upon the burial of their dead developed observances which not only seemed strange to the alien and the transient but which were scarcely practicable in time of war, and in a military organization. There was, for example, the practice of retaining mourners in distinctive dress, to participate in the funeral procession; a police official usually witnessed and certified to the fact of interment; the coffin was purchased customarily from a firm possessing a monopoly on the supply of such articles in the locality. Such restrictions being obviously undesirable in time of military operations, negotiations took place between the American and French Governments early in 1918, and an agreement was reached giving freedom to the American military and naval authorities with regard to the method of burying their military dead.

The same agreement included the significant provision that, following the evacuation of the American Expeditionary Forces from France:

The Government of the French Republic would examine conjointly with the American Government the methods to be taken to insure, in conformity with the French laws and police regulations regarding hygiene, the transport, and return to the United States of the bodies of American soldiers and sailors interred in France.

The French Parliament, late in 1915, had enacted legislation prescribing the methods of procuring sites for French and Allied burial places. The cost incurred in the acquisition of these plots was to be borne by the French Government, though the upkeep of the graves was subject to assignment to organizations established for that purpose in the Allied countries. The responsibility for carrying out the provisions of this law was intrusted to the Office for Military Graves in the Ministry of War.

The Government of Great Britain effected an agreement with the French Government early in 1919 providing that the recently established Imperial Commission on Military Sepultures should be the



INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR VIEWS OF ARMY BARRACKS USED AS
Y. W. C. A. HOSTESS HOUSE AT ROMAGNE



HOSTESS HOUSES AT BONY (above) AND BELLEAU WOOD (below)
Constructed by Red Cross; operated by Y. W. C. A.

official organization having jurisdiction over Great Britain's military graves in France. This arrangement provided, in the main, that isolated tombs of British soldiers found in the region of former battle fields might be removed after the cessation of hostilities, with a view of gathering bodies into military cemeteries; that the French Government would instruct local authorities to grant authorizations for the disinterment and transportation of bodies to military cemeteries; that the Ministry of War would acquire such ground as was certified to be necessary for burial places by the Imperial Commission; that disinterments with a view of transportation to the United Kingdom might occur only with the acquiescence of the Imperial Commission; and that all commemorative monuments in France honoring British military actions should be presented to the Imperial Commission.

Each request made by American officials to the French Government, during the period just after the armistice, looking toward the return of military dead to the United States from the zone of operations, met a firm disinclination on the part of the French Government to permit such removal. Reporting an extended conference held with representatives of the French Commission for Military Graves, in April, 1919, officials of the American Graves Registration stated:

The authorities of France have given due consideration to each practical and gruesome aspect of the horrors involved in the passing of the millions of bodies of military dead over its national railways or highways, the insuperable difficulties of transportation, sanitary regulations, the public health, effective registration, problems of construction and reconstruction, etc., and have therefore promulgated the existing decree of prohibition concerning such removals.

* * * Should an exception be made in the case of American dead, it would at once involve each of the other nations in clamorous agitation for like action.

* * * France particularly, whose whole territory would become a veritable charnel house if such extensive exhumations should take place, entertains strong hope of deliverance from such an event.

The "existing decree of prohibition" referred to was a promulgation of "provisional instructions" by the French Premier, two months previously, in February, 1919. These instructions, which had the force of law, forbade indefinitely disinterments in the "zone of military operations" except such as were necessary for the centralization of bodies, the release of private grounds, the making over of cemeteries, and such removals as were dictated by considerations of public health.

The "zone of operations" was given boundaries (which later were to have an important effect on the work of removing American dead), as follows:

The southwest of the Department of the Somme.

The west and south of the Department of the Oise.

The west and south of the districts of Meaux, Coulommiers, and Provins.

The south of the Departments of the Marne and Meuse.

The west and south of the Department of the Vosges.

The west of the territory of Belfort.

At about the same time there was introduced in the French Parliament a bill prohibiting the exhumation and transportation to their homes of the remains of French, allied, or enemy soldiers or sailors before January 1, 1922. The "statement of motives" presented with the bill, which was thought to have the indorsement of the French administration, stated in conclusion :

To sum up: The prohibition against the transportation during a period of three years of all remains of soldiers who have died during the war * * * would appear to be indispensable on the following grounds :

(1) Not to demobilize rolling stock for purposes which could be deferred, insomuch as availabilities are unequal to the most urgent needs.

(2) To enable the methodical reconstruction of cemeteries, the regrouping of isolated graves, and the identification of tombs.

The Commanding General of the American Expeditionary Forces called the attention of the War Department to the fact that the freedom of action of the United States with respect to the disposition of military remains would be prejudiced by the enactment of the proposed legislation. The War Department having communicated with the State Department, the Acting Secretary of State instructed the American ambassador in Paris to make a vigorous protest at the ministry of foreign affairs against the passage of the bill. This was done, and the projected legislation was not enacted, though it was substantially, if informally, put into effect by the "provisional instructions" of the Premier.

The procuring of permanent places of burial for American dead overseas was given tangible form shortly after the armistice, when Marshal Petain wrote to Gen. Pershing proposing the establishment of American fields of honor in France, and stating that, "France would be happy and proud to retain the bodies of American victims who had fallen on her soil."

The marshal thought that localities where our soldiers had distinguished themselves in battle would be most suitable for the location of American cemeteries, and he offered his services in bringing the matter before the French Government. Gen. Pershing replied that, "Should the United States Government desire me to undertake negotiations, with a view of establishing permanent cemeteries in France, I should be happy to avail myself of your offer of assistance."

In America, meanwhile, a rather sharp difference of opinion was developing concerning the general advisability of removing the remains of military dead from France. "The Bring Home the Soldier Dead League," with which was affiliated many parents and relatives of our overseas dead, was organized for the purpose of pressing and expediting the bringing home of the re-

mains of their kinsmen. "The Field of Honor Association" was forming to assist in crystallizing a public opinion favorable to the retention of military remains overseas, excepting in cases where the next of kin insisted upon their return.

Gen. Pershing, cabling to the War Department on the subject before his departure from France, believed "That could these soldiers speak for themselves, they would wish to be left undisturbed, where with their comrades they had fought their last fight. * * * The graves of our soldiers constitute, if they are allowed to remain, a perpetual reminder to our allies of the liberty and ideals upon which the greatness of America rests."

He recommended that "None of our dead be removed from Europe, unless their nearest relatives so demand after a full understanding of all the sentimental reasons against such a removal."

The American Legion, at its Minneapolis convention, considering the return of military dead, passed this resolution:

Resolved, That it be the sense of the American Legion that the bodies of the American dead be not returned from France, except in cases where the parents or next of kin desire that the Government return them, and that the United States of America, in cooperation with the Government and the people of France, establish and maintain cemeteries for the American dead that remain in France, or other foreign countries, to the end that the graves of those who made the supreme sacrifice may be maintained as a fitting memorial of America's unselfish service to humanity.

The attitude of the War Department, as indicated in Section 1, remained constant—it would neither propose nor oppose the bringing of military dead from overseas to America, but it would place all available information at the disposal of the relatives concerned, and would abide by their decision.

In order, however, to put into effect the wishes of the next of kin, it was necessary for the War Department to reach an agreement with the French Government that would give us freedom of action, with regard to leaving our deceased soldiers in France, or bringing their remains to the United States.

In December, 1919, the French council of ministers gave permission to the American authorities to return any bodies buried outside the military zone; but repeated representations by the State Department to the Ministry of War and the Foreign Office failed to procure permission for the removal of remains from the former battle area.

At the end of 1919 a comprehensive communication from the State Department urged that the French prohibition should be lifted, in view of the facts:

(1) That the great distance between France and America and the great expense involved made it impracticable for all but a few relatives to visit the

graves of their loved ones, as is relatively easy for those who are not separated by the ocean, and by barriers of language and custom, from the resting places of their deceased kinsfolk.

(2) That the comparatively small number of American soldiers among the nearly 5,000,000 military dead in France would not seriously embarrass the French Government if permission were given for their removal.

(3) That arrangements could be made for preventing undue interference with traffic, or the routing of a large number of bodies over densely populated districts, thus avoiding the strain upon railroad facilities and the depression of civilian morale.

(4) That countries other than France were permitting the repatriation of remains, and that failure or delay on the part of France would create an unfavorable impression.

The French Government was unwilling to go further in reply than to admit in principle the right of the American Government to return its military remains to the United States, but to withhold permission for the exercise of this right in the zone of operations. The French Premier, however, agreed to the appointment of an international commission to attempt the working out of a plan for the exhumation and transport of the bodies of American soldiers to French ports, "taking into account the material availabilities of the Government, both as regards coal and cars and other means of transportation."

The State Department requested the Secretary of War to name the American members of the international commission; he immediately appointed Col. Bentley T. Mott, the military attaché at Paris, and Col. Henry F. Rethers, Chief of the American Graves Registration Service, Quartermaster Corps, in Europe; and in late February dispatched the writer, as assistant of the Secretary of War, to Europe to make available for the commission the results of previous negotiations.

IV. FRANCO-AMERICAN NEGOTIATIONS, MARCH- APRIL, 1920.

The commission appointed by the French Government to meet the American commissioners included representatives from nearly every ministry in the cabinet. The size of such a group, the absence of some of its members from Paris, the difficulty of settling upon a time suitable for all, frustrated for a time the efforts of the American members to expedite the convening of the two groups.

On March 20, finally, the initial meeting was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Both American commissioners were present, and for the French Government there were in attendance officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, War, Public Works, Liberated Regions, Hygiene, and Pensions. M. Maginot, the Minister of Pensions and the chairman of the commission, presided.

In the course of a prolonged discussion concerning the removal of American dead from the "zone of operations," the French members touched upon the giving of priority to the United States over France in the making of disinterments, the sanitary dangers to be overcome, and the limitations on transport and labor facilities in northern France. The president of the commission stated that he would bring the entire matter before the next meeting of the French cabinet, on March 23, and the commission adjourned to reconvene on March 24.

Preceding the second meeting of the commission, the American members invited a number of French sanitary officers to the headquarters of the Graves Registration Service, where a detailed demonstration and explanation was made of the methods to be employed by us, with particular reference to hygienic safeguards.

At the second session of the full commission, on the 24th, the president urged, as the time for beginning operations, a date not prior to November 1, and stated that he would submit a formal proposal to the American representatives on the following day.

The proposal referred to did not name a specific time when exhumations would be sanctioned but it prohibited disinterments and removals before the end of the summer. A detailed reply dispatched by the American representatives on the same day, March 25, stated that no indefinite arrangement as to the time of beginning work could be acceptable in the United States and proposed the fixing of an early date, after which the Graves Registration Service might be free to carry on its work in the "zone of operations."

The hesitancy of the French officials to comply immediately with the requests of the American representatives rested mainly on seven chief considerations:

1. Their unwillingness to discriminate in favor of Americans at a time when French dead (far more numerous and much less easily identified) could not yet be returned from their battle-field graves to their homes.

2. The fear of the effect upon badly strained civilian morale of a constant succession of westbound funeral trains and eastbound mortuary supplies.

3. The possibility of other nations with a vastly greater number of dead making similar demands if the American requests were complied with.

4. An uncertainty as to whether the hygienic features of the operations could be safeguarded sufficiently to eliminate all fears based on sanitation.

5. The necessity for avoiding—during the opening stages of economic recovery in the devastated areas—all enterprises which could be delayed, thus allowing the utilization of all the meager available

resources for getting the battle area and its returning refugees back to a normal basis of living.

6. The shortage of locomotive equipment throughout France and the destruction of portions of the northern rail systems; direct rail connection has not yet been reestablished with the villages nearest the two largest American cemeteries in Europe.

7. The acute scarcity of coal in France, felt particularly in the early summer of 1920 when the negotiations concerning the disposition of American military dead were in progress.

This last difficulty—in combination with the strike of railway employees at the beginning of April, and the fear of a general strike in early May—loomed large in the minds of the French representatives. There have been inquiries in America as to whether the plea of the French relative to their fuel and transport situations represented a real or fanciful objection. An actual observation of conditions would convince the spectator, in my opinion, that this difficulty is far from being without a basis in fact. Tourists, of course, will penetrate to the former battle fields and in doing so will consume coal and gasoline; the combination of the travelers' insistence (often with laudable and sufficient reasons) upon reaching the battle areas, and the not unnatural desire of the returning inhabitants of the villages to reestablish, to some extent, their social and commercial relations, would be likely in some degree to overcome any considerations of prudence and conservation. But the fact that France faces a serious coal shortage is reflected in drastic fashion by the inconvenience to which its own citizens have been subjected, even in their capital city. I quote excerpts which might be multiplied at will from articles in French, British, and American newspapers, appearing during the time when the agreement regarding American military remains was being negotiated:

The Chicago Tribune, European edition, March 9, 1920, stated:

Consequent on the necessity of saving coal following the miners' strike in the Pas de Calais, a decree framed by the Ministers of the Interior and of Public Works has been issued, ordering the closing of cafés and of restaurants at 10 p. m.; that of theaters, music halls, and cinemas, at 11 p. m.

In addition, it is decreed the Metropolitan and Nord-Sud subway lines will stop running at 11 p. m.

The New York Herald, European edition, March 10, 1920, stated:

All the French railway lines have been instructed to suppress a certain number of passenger trains. The suburban and workmen's trains and all the great international trains are to run as usual, but the express and ordinary train services are to be reduced about one-third.

The London Times, March 11, 1920, stated:

In the Pas de Calais Department 55,000 miners are now out on strike, but no instance of disorder has occurred. The effect of the strike upon the northeastern

Provinces, which are yet recovering from war devastation, are very serious; that is especially the case at Lille.

Numerous factories have had to close down, including the glass works at Valenciennes and Aniche. The surface coal stocks of the mines are completely finished, and shortly, it is stated, all remaining stocks at the factories will also have been used up.

The Chicago Tribune, European edition, March 16, 1920, stated:

Faced by a miners' strike in the great basin of the north, which has already brought out more than 100,000 men, according to latest estimates, France is preparing for the possibility of further restrictions on transports, heat, light, and so on, similar to those now in force.

Already not a mine in the great coal fields around Lille is working and the effect upon the many industries in that region which depend upon its coal is serious. The cold weather has caused much suffering to individuals.

Montmartre restaurants and cafés are on strike because of the early closing.

The proprietors assert that the early closing bill which compels them to close at 10 p. m. meant ruin.

The Paris Temps, March 11, 1920, stated:

The miners' strike has provoked the reestablishment of certain restrictions. A prescription of the Prefet de Police has fixed, for Paris, the details of application of the decree.

All establishments open to the public will close at 10 p. m., except theaters and moving-picture shows, which will be allowed to continue their performance until 11 p. m., from March 12 on.

From March 15 the last train starting from the terminus stations on the Metropolitan north and south lines, tramways, and autobus will leave the terminus at 11.30 p. m.

The restrictions will also concern railroads. The Minister of Railroads has made the following declaration. The main points of the project can be summarized as follows:

Maintenance of all suburban trains and workmen trains, as well as all international trains, but variable reductions, according to the needs of the different railroads, of about one-third of the total of express and local trains.

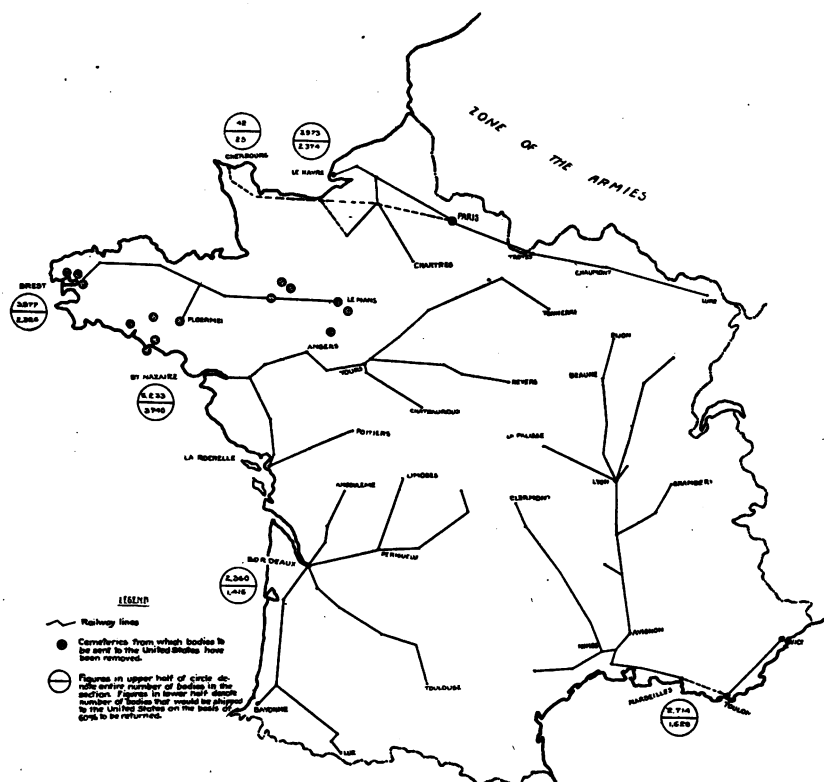
The New York Herald, European edition, March 16, 1920, stated:

In point of fact, additional restrictions in the use of coal are not likely to cause much of an upheaval in the normal life—such as it is these days—of Parisians. Already theaters, restaurants, cafés, dance halls, and subway system are closing up, or down, early, and the streets are poorly lighted. And coal, moreover, is difficult to get anyway.

First, the crisis in production caused a coal restriction, then the strikes in the Nord and the Pas-de-Calais, then the shortage of means of transport, then the railway strike and its aftermath, a congestion of cars on tracks everywhere in France.

The American representatives negotiated constantly with the French officials in an effort to minimize or obviate the difficulties existing in the various objections cited, and reached a tentative agreement.

Prior to the next meeting of the council of ministers conferences were held between the American commissioners and the Minister of



FLOW OF RAIL TRANSPORTATION TO FRENCH BASE PORTS

Hygiene; and on April 1 a second meeting with French hygienists was held at the American headquarters.

The French cabinet, meeting on April 2, again took the matter under consideration and instructed the president of the commission to indicate the willingness of his Government to adopt the terms of the agreement reached by the commissioners, with the exception that the actual removals from the zone of operations might not begin prior to September 15, 1920.

The terms of this agreement are as follows:

Pursuant to the agreement proposed by the French Foreign Office to the American Department of State in August, 1918, and thereafter ratified by the Federal Government, the French Republic recognizes and adheres to the principle that the Federal Government may exhume and transport to the United States the remains of American soldiers, sailors, marines, and associated personnel now interred in the French "zone of military operations," as defined in the provisional instruction of the President of the Council, published in the *Journal Officiel* of June 19, 1919.

Actual transportation of remains by the American Graves Registration Service from the zone of operations under this agreement may begin at any time after September 15, 1920.

The Federal Government, under the terms of the present agreement, will limit the return of bodies to those whose removal to America is requested specifically by their next of kin.

The Graves Registration Service, through the observance of stringent hygienic precautions, agrees to insure the prevention of epidemic from the conduct of its operations. A detailed statement of sanitary safeguards will be transmitted to the *Service de l'Etat Civil et des Sepultures Militaires*, and, at the option of the latter organization, a French hygienic officer may be associated with the Graves Registration Service in all of its operations.

In agreement with the Ministry of Transportation, the American Graves Registration Service will undertake so to locate the points of concentrating bodies for shipment to ports as to require a minimum of construction or rearrangement of railroad facilities.

The Ministry of Transportation, on the request of the Graves Registration Service, will allocate upon a rental basis an amount of rail transportation sufficient for the actual necessities of the latter after September 15. The Graves Registration Service, on its part, will undertake to limit its rail transport requirements to French ports under this agreement to such a minimum as may be necessary under most economical conditions of utilization, not exceeding a maximum of 100 standard box cars in use at any given time.

The regulations relative to concentration and regrouping of bodies in the "zone of military operations" as published in the *Journal Officiel* of June 19, 1919, are not altered by this agreement.

The Secretary of War on April 24 advised the Secretary of State that this agreement was acceptable to the War Department, and two days later the State Department cabled the ambassador at Paris to advise the French Government that the United States would adhere to the proposal as drawn.

The work of the American commission being now completed, I recommend that it be dissolved.

V. CARING FOR THE GRAVES OF THE FALLEN.

In describing the operations of late April, 1918, the Commander in Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces wrote:

On April 20, Lieut. McCormick and his group arrived at Mandres and began their work under heavy shell fire and gas; and although troops were in dugouts, these men immediately went to the cemetery and in order to preserve records and locations repaired and erected new crosses as fast as the old ones were blown down. They also completed the extension to the cemetery, this work occupying a period of one and one-half hours, during which time shells were falling continuously and they were subjected to mustard gas. They gathered many bodies which had been first in the hands of the Germans and were later retaken by American counterattacks. Identification was especially difficult, all papers and tags having been removed and most of the bodies being in a terrible condition and beyond recognition.

The work so cited by Gen. Pershing was that of advance group No. 1, Graves Registration Service. The organization of this service was authorized in the office of the Quartermaster General by the War Department in August, 1917. A dozen units, each consisting of 2 officers and 50 men, were organized in the United States and sent overseas. In the A. E. F. five similar units of approximately equal strength had been organized. These two groups, as well as the Red Cross section for photographing individual graves, were consolidated in February, 1918, by order of General Headquarters American Expeditionary Forces. The Graves Registration Service remained the name of the combined organization.

Since the armistice, except for a brief period, all the work of centralizing remains has been under the control of the Graves Registration Service. This service and the cemeterial branch were combined recently in the office of the Quartermaster General, the consolidated organization being called the Cemeterial Division. The overseas organization, subordinate to the Cemeterial Division but given large discretion in operation, continues to be called the American Graves Registration Service, Quartermaster Corps, in Europe.

The initial burials among combat troops were made by the units themselves, not by the Graves Registration Service. The latter organization, however, followed the advancing battle line in order to complete or remake hasty burials, to procure identifications, and, where necessary, to improve the locations of burial places.

Its general duties were the acquisition of land for cemeteries, the arrangement and control of these cemeteries, and the registration of all American graves wherever found.

A detailed examination of the overseas operations probably would indicate that the supply of personnel from America proceeded with disproportionate rapidity, compared with the supply of the data

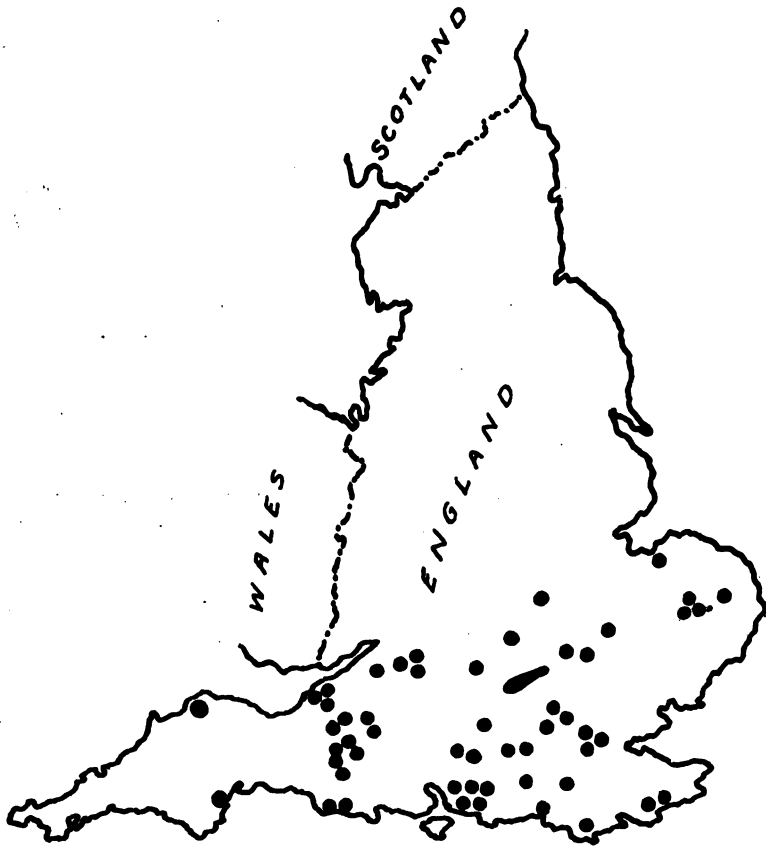
and materials necessary for the beginning of field operations. The difficulties and delay encountered in the manufacture and transport of supplies, particularly coffins; the clerical work of canvassing all relatives as to their desires concerning the remains of their kinsmen (which had to be completed before disinterments could begin but which could be started only a short time in advance of exhumations, in order to minimize the number of removals of families, deaths of relatives, and other occurrences likely to impair the accuracy of the data collected); the complicated procedure necessary in some places for securing the permission of local authorities for the initial disinterments; and the lack of any previous experience on which a forecast of personnel and supplies could be confidently based—these are among the considerations which prevented the immediate utilization of all personnel as quickly as it reached France and England. The difficulties mentioned, however, are now wholly or substantially obviated.

The first main divisions of the overseas organization are those of zones—the zones of France, of Great Britain, and of mid-Europe. These zones are further subdivided into sections, five in France, three in Great Britain, etc. Each section has its shipping port and each port, while in use, a port commander. Actual field work is performed by mobile operating units, consisting of embalmers, technical assistants, and laborers, supervised by inspectors and responsible in the first instance to the section commanders.

Stringent regulations are in effect to prevent confusion of identity during disinterments and transportation. The actual carrying of remains across the ocean and through the United States by rail to the home is in charge of the Army Transportation Service. But during the ocean voyage a convoyer of the Graves Registration Service remains with the bodies, and at Hoboken a branch office of the same service checks all incoming remains.

The first bodies returning from France will be those, in the main, lying within a radius of 100 miles from the base ports. This is for the reason that satisfactory or even tolerable freight service on the railroads of France is quite impossible to secure, owing to the acute fuel crisis. The decrease in French coal production by the flooding of mines during the enemy's occupation, the strikes during the spring in the Departments of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais, and the failure of German deliveries to reach nearly the amounts expected, leave the country in a dangerous situation.

Though practically all the automobiles of the American Expeditionary Forces were included in the bulk sale to the French Government (and the available remainder were in use by the forces in Germany or tied up by legal proceedings), the War Department met the



BRITISH BURIAL PLACES FROM WHICH ALL AMERICAN DEAD TO BE RETURNED
TO THE UNITED STATES HAVE BEEN EVACUATED

rail transport shortage by shipping into France a considerable amount of automotive transports, which, within the area of its effective operation, will make the Graves Registration Service independent of railway limitations.

Until now (May 1) all bodies shipped from France have proceeded through the port of Brest. Eventually, though perhaps not simultaneously, shipments will be made also through the ports of St. Nazaire, Le Havre, or Cherbourg, Marseilles, Bordeaux, and La Rochelle. St. Nazaire will accommodate the largest number, and the shipments from the other ports will vary in the order named.

Shipments from England have gone through Southampton. Later, use probably will be made of Liverpool. Bodies from Germany are likely to be evacuated through Antwerp, beginning in late May, assuming that transport arrangements are completed with the Belgian authorities.

The correspondent of the Stamford and Rutland News, after the first field operations of the Graves Registration Service in the south of England, described his impressions as follows:

The work was carried out in a most reverent manner by a special party of American men, under the direction of the United States military authorities, who were represented by officers.

That portion of God's Acre where the interments took place (during 1918) was screened off from the public view, and the public were not admitted to the cemetery while the operations were in progress.

Each coffin was raised from its resting place by means of ropes. Then the lid was taken off, and the corpse, after being disinfected, was carefully wrapped in a khaki sheet and lifted into a zinc and copper lined shell.

A disk bearing the name of the departed soldier was pinned to the sheet, and the whole was draped with white material.

A domed metal lid was then placed on the shell and hermetically sealed down.

Each shell was afterwards inclosed in a beautiful polished walnut coffin, which was placed in a stout wooden packing case ready for transshipment.

A large motor lorry stood on the drive close at hand, and into this each case was lifted and the vehicle then left direct for Southampton, from which port the coffins are being shipped. On arrival the coffins will be ready for immediate reburial.

Actual disinterments were begun in England on February 3, 1920, and in the French "zone of the interior" on March 29, 1920. The securing of supplies and of authorizations for disinterment has proceeded less rapidly than was anticipated; but the first difficulty is being vigorously attacked and the second has been eliminated. The actual disinterments have been made at a considerably greater rate of speed than was originally estimated.

While shipments to the United States are being made of those bodies requested from the French "zone of the interior," those not requested are being left in the cemeteries where they are now located,

until the westward movement has been completed, and until the permanent Fields of Honor have been designated.

VI. THE FIELDS OF HONOR.

Death is no more a respecter of places than of persons. When the conclusion of the armistice gave pause to armies which for four months had subordinated everything to the relentless prosecution of a crushing offensive movement, the bodies of American dead were to be found—at the front and in the rear—in nearly 2,000 separate locations.

Naturally there has been some apprehension among relatives in America when word reached them during the succeeding months that the bodies of their loved ones had been removed from the place of initial interment. There exists among bereaved families an aversion to the unnecessary disturbance of remains, and from many quarters inquiries came asking the reasons for these transfers.

An inspection of the old battle area makes the reply—in so far as the “zone of operations” is concerned—reasonably clear.

Battle burials, unhappily, were made often under conditions unavoidably terrible. In order to secure some degree of shelter from shell-fire, temporary burial grounds in many instances were located in low-lying regions. These places were subject to constant inundation, which made highly desirable the removal of American dead to more suitable locations.

Much of the operation of the American Expeditionary Forces occurred in places ordinarily isolated and inaccessible, such as portions of the Argonne forest. The initial burials were made of necessity in the immediate vicinity of the place where death occurred. But once the fighting had ceased it would have been unfortunate to leave these graves isolated and unapproachable, in wild and remote regions.

Perhaps a major portion of burials at the front were made in what had been cultivated plots and in areas which now again are being used for agriculture. Obviously it would have been unwise to permit these remains to lie uncollected, casually scattered among the fields and farmyards of France.

Every battered shell of a village along the battle line constituted a headquarters for some combat organization, and afforded a degree of shelter for some military unit. The burials from that unit had to be made amid the ruins of the town; and the rebuilding of it often-times makes necessary now the transfer of graves that otherwise might lie beside a street or in a market place.

In addition, grouped graves permit of care and attention being bestowed upon them which would be quite impracticable were they left in the far separated spots where they happened first to be.

So our military remains were concentrated into a relatively small number of cemeteries which might be properly ornamented and cared for as the temporary or permanent resting places of American soldier dead. The original 1,700 locations are reduced now to less than 600, ranging downward from Romagne, with its 22,000 crosses, to village plots with few or even a single body. But these last are few; it is practically impossible now to find an isolated American grave in France.

Approximately 88 per cent of our dead in France rest in American burial places; about 9 per cent are in French cemeteries, and the remainder are in British and German plots.

The American Legion has urged that permanent fields be located for those whose return from France is not requested. The Field of Honor Association is organized in furtherance of the same object. Through Marshal Pétain the Republic of France long since offered to provide the necessary cemeterial sites. Moreover, thousands of parents have requested the War Department to permit their deceased children to remain in France.

For the accommodation of those bodies, therefore, which will rest forever overseas, I recommend the retention of the following three cemeteries:

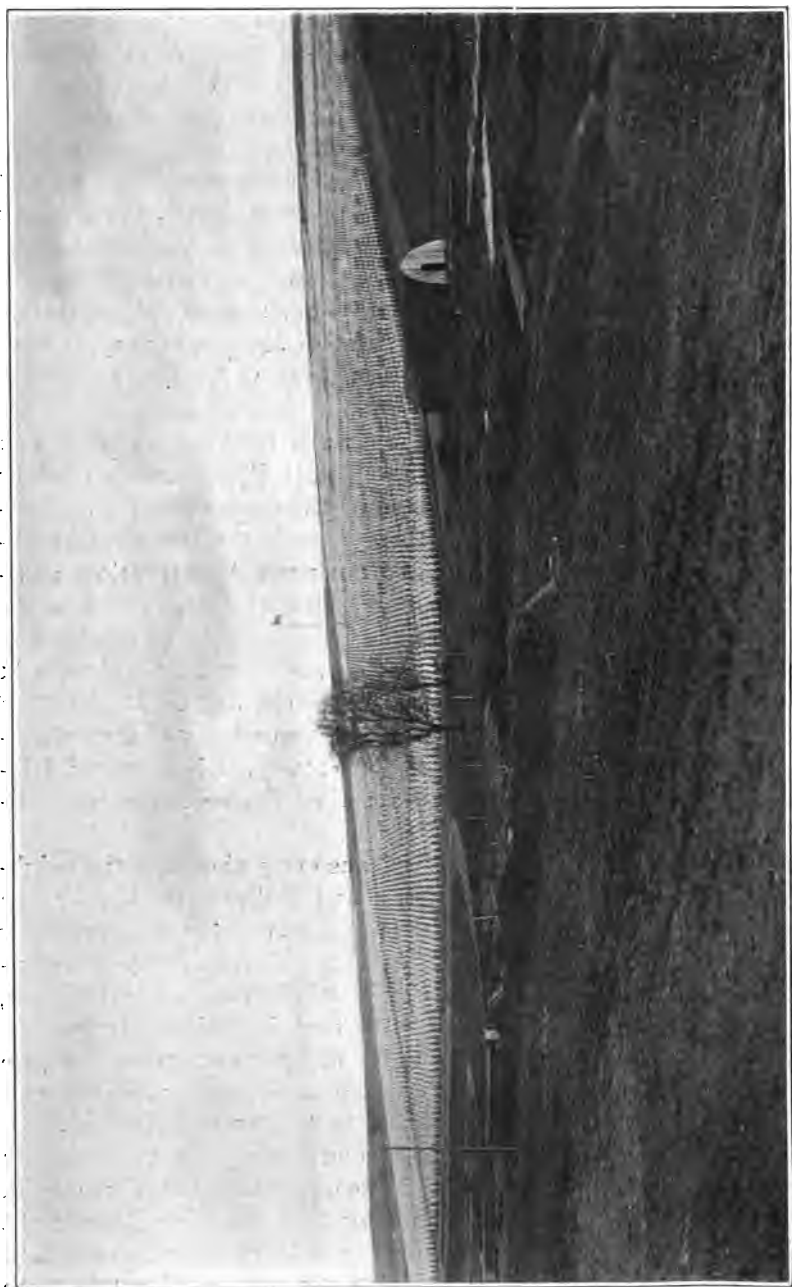
Romagne-sous-Montfaucon, Department of the Meuse.

Belleau Wood, Department of the Aisne.

Suresnes, Department of the Seine.

There remain upward of 500 locations where American dead are buried. It is clearly desirable to reduce to the lowest possible number the places permanently held. In a number of instances, requests have reached the War Department from Army units, requesting that cemeteries be retained at points where those units had rendered distinguished service. Any general policy of establishing divisional cemeteries, or of placing permanent battle cemeteries at the various points where brilliant or sanguinary engagements occurred, would so scatter our dead and multiply our burial places, as to lessen the impressiveness of a few large fields of honor, would increase the problems of administration, and would decrease the possibilities of ornamentation by parceling out among many points the sum total available for expenditure. If, for example, there is one American cemetery at the front, it will be possible to provide hostess houses, to erect permanent buildings and to arrange landscape effects, that would not be possible on an equal scale at each of four or five American cemeteries along the battle line.

But in one case particularly—that of the 27th and 30th Divisions—a deep and natural sentiment attaches to the fact that practically all the work of those divisions was done in conjunction with the British



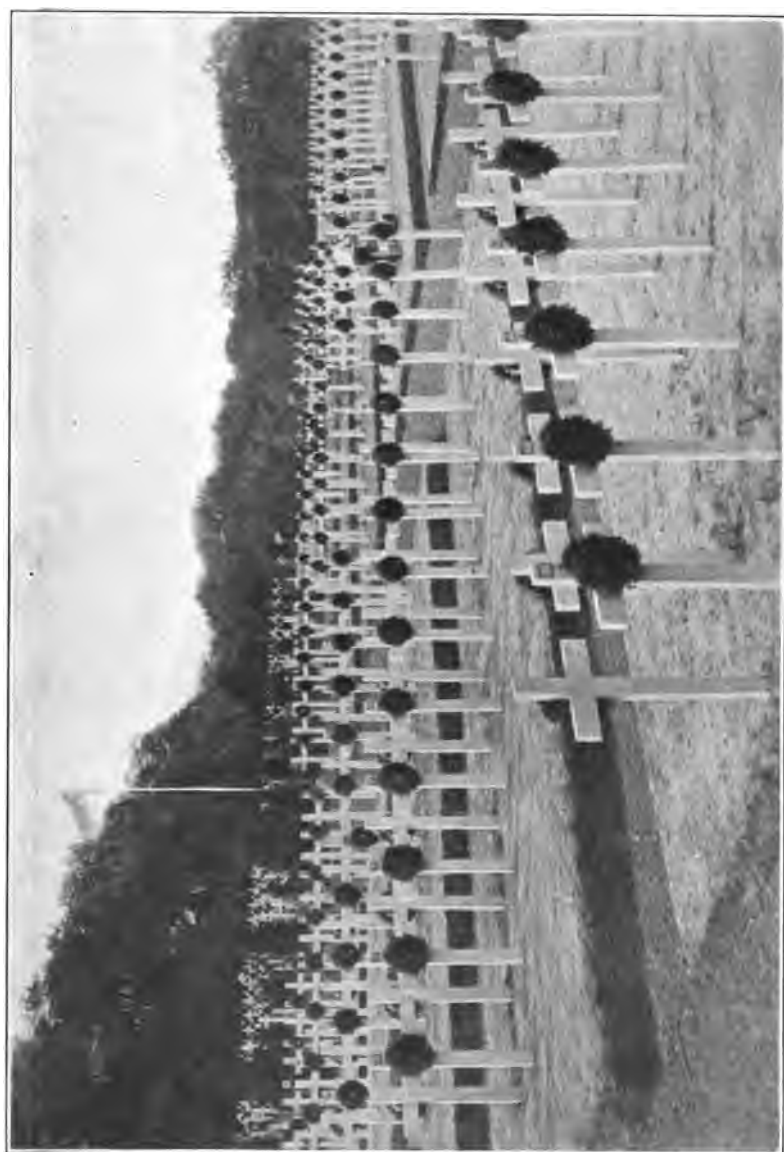
ROMAGNE

Army. I should scarcely wish to recommend on that account that the dead from those organizations be not brought into the central burial place of their fellow countrymen, but it is to be hoped that at Bony or elsewhere, a fitting memorial design may commemorate the distinctive service of the 2d Corps with the British forces.

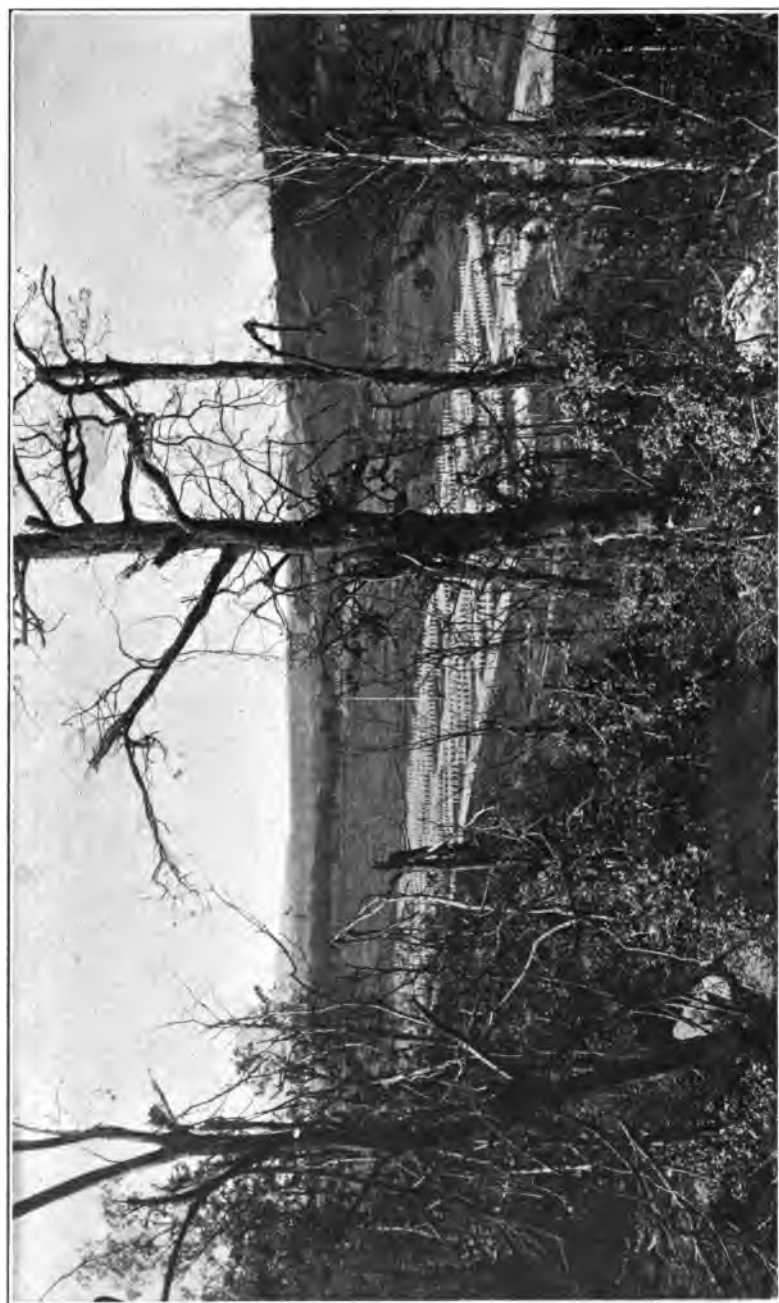
The construction of semi-permanent works at some of our present burial plots—indeed the very existence of those plots as established locations—prevents the mere choosing of theoretically ideal localities upon a map. In view of all the circumstances and after having visited practically every site which has been suggested for retention, I am of the belief that our securing the three locations named above would constitute the most desirable arrangement for the fitting care of our dead in France.

Nestling beneath the massive gray walls of Fort Valerien and with the winding valley of the Seine beneath it, Suresnes Cemetery is picturesquely located in the village of the same name on the outskirts of Paris. Flanking it on three sides is the beautiful Washington Boulevard. At either end of the present reservation, additional parcels of land are being secured so that (in addition to the enlargement of the area) there will be no possibility of commercial encroachment. More than 1,000 bodies are now at Suresnes and there will be a maximum capacity of nearly 5,000. Its location within a few miles of the capital solves the questions of transportation and hotel accommodations. Sentimentally, it is a splendid location for a lasting and solemn memorial of Franco-American military cooperation.

Deep in the consciousness of Americans everywhere are the neighboring localities of Chateau-Thierry and Belleau Woods. These spots to us are symbols which serve to dramatize the final crushing of the German offensive on the banks of the Marne and the development of that smashing allied attack in midsummer of 1918 which, before the ending of the year, was to beat imperious armies into bitter submission. Americans in France will go as a matter of course to the fields nearest Paris where our troops so distinguished themselves. It was at Belleau that Marine forces, temporarily detached from the Navy and attached to the Second Division, were so heavily and heroically engaged, together with the other divisional elements, in June of 1918. It is particularly fitting that the War Department should retain this burial place, so firmly held in the affections and so baptized by the blood of the Army's sister service. The trip from Paris is made easily in a day by automobile or train, and ample hotel accommodations are available in Chateau-Thierry, a few miles from Belleau. At the cemetery, which now contains about 2,000 bodies, a small cottage has been erected by the Red Cross and is operated by two



SURESNES



BELLEAU

Y. W. C. A. workers. A Red Cross automobile supplies local transportation.

When in late September from all the region about the Meuse and the Forest of Argonne a khaki host went forward to the attack which was to end only on the eve of the armistice, when every roadside sign was labeled "Nach Sedan," the dominating position of the enemy—as Montsec had been at St. Mihiel—was the great hulk of Montfaucon. Not far away was the modest village of Romagne sous Montfaucon. Now, on a gentle slope beside the gaunt ruins of the little town, 22,000 crosses mark the places of nearly half our dead in the zone of the armies. They lie in ground they themselves wrested from the enemy in the last month of fighting.

Transportation facilities to Romagne are still inadequate and there are no commercial hotel accommodations in the immediate vicinity. But a combination of Army barracks, Red Cross equipment, and Y. W. C. A. personnel has resulted in the establishment of a comfortable hostess house, simple and unpretentious, but adequately able to supply food and lodging at nominal cost to parents visiting the cemetery. Two Red Cross automobiles are kept there and meet the trains each day at Dun-sur-Meuse, the nearest railroad station.

The area actually occupied by graves at Romagne is approximately 259 by 311 meters. The entire tract, inclusive of the grave plot. originally desired for American control, measures 690 by 899 meters. In all probability the size of the cemetery itself will not increase—the number of bodies removed to America will be larger than the number to be moved into Romagne. Nevertheless, I recommend, pending more definite developments as to the amount and design of buildings and landscaping involved in the Romagne project, that the War Department should not decrease the area intended to be included within the reservation, but should proceed to the acquisition of the larger tract.

A large amount of work has been done at Romagne in the erection of barracks, the construction of walls and fences, the sowing of grass, the laying of gravel, the planting of flowers, and the installation of artificial drainage. Being five times the size of any other American cemetery in France, the work of construction and upkeep has proceeded on a scale correspondingly greater than at other points. The remoteness of Romagne from French centers of population is not a sufficient deterrent to its retention. Railroad connection probably will be made with Dun, a few miles to the east; and at the cemetery relatives will find ample, if simple, living accommodations. Indeed a location of relative seclusion would be preferred by many persons as more befitting a city of the dead than a place near the much

traveled paths of casual passers-by. The Americans who will have an interest in the white field at Romagne will have an interest also in the terrain round about, for which the men whose remains are there paid the full measure of devotion. Verdun, Montfaucon, Grandpre, Sedan—these will have their place for all the years in the history texts of unborn generations. And those relatives and friends who will have occasion to visit the Field of Honor will wish no less to visit these other fields of honor which witnessed the last advance of the gallant ranks whose tents are spread on fame's eternal camping ground.

VII. A WAR MEMORIALS COUNCIL.

The parents and the families of those soldiers who will remain always overseas can have no concern more near their hearts than the care and ornamentation of God's acre. But also among citizens, generally—among those whose family circles have not been touched by death in war—one need not go farther than the correspondence columns of newspapers, or the chance conversations of Pullman cars, to learn the universal and reverential interest that prevails with respect to the graves of the fallen.

In order that uniformity and perpetuity of attention may be assured, the guardianship over the remains of those who have "gone west" must be primarily an official responsibility. But it must not be merely official. It must not be wholly the concern of any governmental bureau or department. It must not become dehumanized into administrative routine. Its contact with the citizenship must be preserved and in some degree it must be a people's work.

All that a government can do will seem incomplete and barren if it be not accompanied by some evidence of the tenderness and sympathy and understanding that is due from the nation at large to those of its number who did not come out from the valley of the shadow.

That the War Department may be assured of the constant counsel and cooperation of representative citizens in the task of arranging for the permanent accommodation of American military dead abroad, I recommend that the Secretary of War appoint a war memorials council as an advisory commission on affairs concerning American military cemeteries overseas and such related matters as may be referred to it. If such a council be appointed, I suggest that it include representation from the National Fine Arts Commission, the American Institute of Architects, the American Forestry Association, the seven affiliated welfare organizations, the American Legion, the Navy Department, the Quartermaster Corps (Cemeterial Division), and the War Plans Division of the General Staff. The

French Commission for Military Graves includes officials from a dozen governmental departments, the Institute of France, the Academy of Medicine, etc. Great Britain's Imperial War Graves Commission consists of representatives from the cabinet, delegates from the dominions, and a number of eminent civilian and military members, appointed by royal warrant.

Within the council, I suggest that there be a committee on hostess-house service, consisting of delegates from the welfare organizations, and a committee on memorial and decorative art.

To this council—preferably as small as possible—and its committees, the War Department might properly look for guidance with respect to the design of headstones, statues, mausoleums, etc., the landscaping of cemeterial projects, and the providing of living accommodations for relatives visiting burial places, as well as for the permanent personnel employed there.

Within the fields of honor I urge that thoroughgoing uniformity should prevail in the decoration of individual graves. Headstones of private design or markers individually decorative should not mar that equality to which the final sacrifice of the deceased has made them heir.

But the States, military organizations, veterans' societies, welfare agencies, etc., will wish to commemorate in stone and metal the valor, devotion, and achievements of the individuals and organizations they espouse. In such cases, within or outside those cemeteries, where authority of the War Department exists, where its advice is asked or where its influence may be exerted—or indeed where State or local authorities may wish to secure the guidance of experienced and expert artistic judgment—the advice of the council's committee on memorial and decorative art should be invoked and followed. The country may thus be reasonably assured that the post-bellum statues and buildings, erected by Federal initiative or concurrence will be free of inartistic types and unsuitable designs.

However serviceable the War Memorials Council may be practically, it is not less desirable, sentimentally. No mean honor would come to citizens called to membership on this council; for it is a proud distinction to have a part in the watch over those whose life went out in the service of the Republic. In years to come, pilgrims will not pass by those endless lines of markers without a resolve that the price they represent must not have been paid in vain. Given the reverential care they deserve, those white rows of headstones will carry inspiration and resolution to all the generations which will visit the spots

Where sleep the brave who sank to rest
By all their country's wishes blest.

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